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Message Text

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42
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USDOC FOR THOMAS BREWER, OIM/LAD

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: BEXP EC
SUBJ: ECUADOREAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GUAYAQUIL

1. FOLLOWING SERIES OF RECENT MEETINGS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF NEWLY-FORMED CHAMBER HAS DECIDED TO CHANGE NAME TO "CAMARA DE COMERCIO INTERNACIONAL." WORD "GUAYAQUIL" WILL APPEAR ONLY IN ADDRESS. BASIC DECISION MADE AT BOARD MEETING AUGUST 19 (AGENDA WAS NOT ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE) TO WHICH CONGEN COMMERCIAL OFFICER UNABLE ATTEND DUE TO PREVIOUS COMMITMENT. SPECIAL MEETING OF BOARD MEMBERS WHO ARE CLOSE FRIENDS OF COMOFF CONVENED BY PRESIDENT MARCEL LANIADO AUGUST 22 TO ANNOUNCE AND EXPLAIN TO US THIS DECISION AND REASONS FOR IT. DURING PAST WEEK, AD HOC MEETINGS OF BOARD HELD TO WORK OUT DETAILS OF NEW ORGANIZATION BEFORE FORMAL PRESENTATION TO MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT.

2. AT MEETING AUGUST 22, LANIADO AND BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT TOOK PAINS TO REASSURE COMOFF THAT CHANGE REFLECTED NO ANTAGONISM TOWARD THE UNITED STATES OR ANY TYPE OF ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING WHATSOEVER. IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH ORIENTATION OF CHAMBER WOULD NOW BE OFFICIALLY NEUTRAL AND INTERNATIONAL, IN REALITY ITS DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES WOULD LIKELY REFLECT IMPORTANCE THAT
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TRADE AND INVESTMENT MATTERS WITH U.S. HAVE IN THE CURRENT

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ECONOMIC PICTURE IN ECUADOR. PRINCIPAL COMMENTS AND REASONS FOR CHANGE, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, WERE AS FOLLOWS:
A. ECUADOR IS NOT ALIGNED WITH ANY PARTICULAR COUNTRY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS TRADE HAS BEEN TRULY INTERNATIONAL IN SCOPE. BUSINESSMEN FROM MANY COUNTRIES ARE INTERESTED IN ECUADOR AND ECUADOREAN BUSINESSMEN, LIKEWISE, ARE NOT COMMITTED TO DOING BUSINESS WITH ANY ONE COUNTRY. IT IS FELT THAT IF THE NEW CHAMBER IS TO REFLECT THE NEW REALITIES OF ECONOMIC LIFE IN ECUADOR IT MUST ADOPT AN INTERNATIONALPOSTURE.

B. THERE IS CURRENTLY A VOID TO FILL IN ECUADOR INVOLVING INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES AND FOCUS. THIS CHAMBER CAN PROVIDE THAT.

C. NUMEROUS PRESENT AND POTENTIAL MEMBERS REPRESENT PRODUCTS OR SERVICES FROM MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY. THEIR INTERESTS ARE BROADER THAN JUST THE UNITED STATES.

D. IT IS POLITICALLY WISER TO APPEAR INDEPENDENT OF THE FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY OF A PARTICULAR COUNTRY. THE CHAMBER DOES NOT EVER WANT TO BE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED OF PROMOTING THE "U.S. LINE" OR BEING INFLUENCED BY THE "U.S. EMBASSY." FYI:
THIS HAS BEEN ONE PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED IN RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS, I.E. SOME POTENTIAL MEMBERS ARE NERVOUS ABOUT OPENLY ALIGNING THEIR BUSINESSES WITH THE UNITED STATES. END FYI.

E. BUSINESSMEN IN THE GUAYAQUIL AREA ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROWING "INTERFERENCE" OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN BUSINESS AND ARE WORRIED THAT IF ECUADOREAN-U.S. RELATIONS SHOULD EVER BE SERIOUSLY STRAINED, MEMBERS OF AN ECUADOREAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MIGHT SUFFER SOME CONSEQUENCES, AS MIGHT THE CHAMBER ITSELF.

F. CERTAIN REMARKS MADE BY ANTONIO GRANDA CENTENO AT JULY 29 DINNER MEETING HERE CONFIRM FEARS OF SEVERAL MEMBERS THAT HE CONSIDERS THE GUAYAQUIL CHAMBER "DEPENDENT" ON QUITO CHAMBER. ALTHOUGH MEMBERS HERE RESPECT WORK AND LEADERSHIP PROVIDED BY GRANDA FOR QUITO CHAMBER, THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE TREATED AS STEPCHILD OF QUITO. RE-ELECTION OF GRANDA TO PRESIDENCY INDI-
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CATES HIS POWER LIKELY TO CONTINUE IN QUITO CHAMBER FOR SOME-
TIME. ALSO, SOME HERE ARE SUSPICIOUS OF GRANDA'S POLITICAL MOTIVES AND DO NOT WISH TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH HIS ACTIONS OR ORGANIZATION HE LEADS.

G. CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IN ECUADOR TRADITIONALLY TAKE PUBLIC STANDS ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO MEMBERSHIP. IT
IS FELT THAT BY ADOPTING NEW NAME LOCAL CHAMBER WILL BE FREER

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TO TAKE STAND ON VARIETY OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES
AFFECTING ECUADOR WITHOUT STIGMA OF BEING "SPOKESMAN" FOR
ONE COUNTRY. RESULT, IT IS FELT, WILL BE THAT CHAMBER'S
VOICE MORE LIKELY TO BE LISTENED TO WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND
WITHOUT ATTACK FROM EXTREMIST POLITICAL TYPES.

3. THE PRECEDING POINTS REPRESENT NOT ONLY THE THOUGHTS OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS, IT WAS EXPLAINED, BUT ARE ALSO A SYNTHETHIS
OF COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM WIDE CROSS-SECTION OF PRESENT AND
POTENTIAL MEMBERS. BOARD NOW FEELS THAT OBJECTIONS OF MANY
POTENTIAL MEMBERS CAN BE OVERCOME AND MEMBERSHIP SIGNIFICANTLY
EXPANDED BEYOND THE APPROX 55 WHO HAVE ALREADY SENT
IN APPLICATIONS. LANIADO AND BOARD WERE WORRIED, HOWEVER,
THAT CONSULATE GENERAL WOULD MISUNDERSTAND REASONS FOR CHANGE
AND WITHDRAW SUPPORT.

4. BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WILL
REMAIN SAME AS ALREADY REPORTED (REF SCHRAGE MEMO OF AUGUST 13)
AND LUIS ALCIVAR WILL BE INVITED TO REMAIN AS EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR WHEN HE RETURNS FROM VACATION IN THE STATES. ALCIVAR
WILL NOT, HOWEVER, BE ABLE TO ASSUME DUTIES FULLTIME UNTIL
END OF YEAR WHEN HE IS RELEASED FROM JOB AS SUB-DIRECTOR DE
TURISMO. IN MEANTIME, WALTER SPURRIER WILL IN EFFECT RUN
CHAMBER ON FULLTIME BASIS AND RECEIVE INCREASE IN SALARY AND
HIS TITLE ELEVATED TO EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FROM THAT OF ADMINIS-
TRATIVE DIRECTOR.

5. PROBLEM OF 12TH, EX-OFFICIO MEMBER OF BOARD SUBSEQUENTLY
RESOLVED BY AMENDING STATUTES TO NAME "CONSUL OR HIS
REPRESENTATIVE IN GUAYAQUIL OF THE COUNTRY WHICH HAS THE
GREATEST AMOUNT OF TRADE WITH ECUADOR." ALTHOUGH BOARD
FELT THAT THIS CLAUSE COULD BE DEFENDED ON ITS OWN MERITS,
IT GAVE THEM CONVENIENT WAY OF ENSURING U.S. (I.E. CONGEN)
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PRESENCE ON BOARD AS REP OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.
ALTERNATE EX-OFFICIO MEMBER WILL BE CHOSEN BY BOARD FROM AMONG
ACCREDITED REPS IN ECUADOR OF "THE COUNTRIES WITH
WHICH ECUADOR HAS IMPORTANT COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE." (FILLING
THIS SLOT HAS PROGRESSED ONLY TO NOMINATION STAGE.)

6. CHAMBER ALSO IN PROCESS OF MOVING ITS OFFICE FROM BI-NATIONAL
CENTER TO NEW DOWNTOWN LOCATION IN EDIFICIO VERA ON CALLE GRAL.
ELIZALDE. ALTHOUGH MOVE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN PLACE ANYWAY IN
VIEW OF NEW ORIENTATION OF CHAMBER, MAIN REASON WAS THAT MORE
SPACIOUS QUARTERS WERE DESIRED. LANIADO IS EXCEPTIONALLY ACTIVE
AT THIS POINT AND WISHES CHAMBER TO "START BIG."

7. AS BOARD NOW SEES IT, INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OPEN
TO MEMBERS THROUGHOUT ECUADOR AND COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT

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OF ECUADOREAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER IN QUITO --ALTHOUGH LOCAL CHAMBER WISHES CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH IT.
BOARD EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR KARL NEWLANDS' SUPPORT IN EARLY GOING AND HOPES, THAT WHEN HE IS INFORMED, HIS REACTION WILL NOT BE TOO ANGRY. FURTHERMORE, POINTS MENTIONED IN PARA 2F NOT LIKELY TO BE EMPHASIZED , OR MAY EVEN BE OMITTED (FOR OBVIOUS REASONS) IN OPEN CONVERSATION, AND SHOULD AT LEAST NOT COME FROM USG SOURCES. BOARD EXPECTS TO CALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MEMBERS SOON TO RATIFY NEW PLANS AFTER WHICH PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE.

8. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THIS CHANGE WAS UNEXPECTED, IT DOES NOT COME AS COMPLETE SURPRISE. REASONS STATED FOR CHANGE ARE CONSISTENT WITH THINKING OF MANY LOCAL BUSINESSMEN, BOTH AMERICAN AND ECUADOREAN. IT NOT UNUSUAL FOR LOCAL AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN, FOR EXAMPLE, TO SEEK LOW PROFILE OR AT LEAST NOT WAVE FLAG TOO HIGH, AND SOME OF MOST SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT NEW CHAMBER HAD COME FROM THIS SECTOR. FURTHERMORE, WE BELIEVE STATEMENTS OF LANIADO AND OTHER BOARD MEMBERS THAT MOVE IS NOT ANTI-AMERICAN BUT IMPORTANT EXPEDIENT, IN PART COSMETIC, TO ACCOMPLISH OBJECTIVES. BOARD INCLUDES THREE AMERICANS AND ONE THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONAL WHO IS HEAD OF BANK OF AMERICA. OF REMAINING SEVEN ECUADOREAN DIRECTORS NONE ARE CONSIDERED ANTI-AMERICAN, IN FACT MOST ARE OPENLY PRO-AMERICAN IN THEIR VIEWS. ALL ARE SERIOUS-MINDED BUSINESS-MEN WHO ARE CONSCIENTIOUSLY DOING WHAT THEY SEE IS NECESSARY.
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ALTHOUGH INITIAL VIEW MAY BE THAT CHANGE REPRESENTS SETBACK FOR US, LONG VIEW MAY BE EXACT OPPOSITE IFORGANIZATION GETS OFF THE GROUND. IT IS STILL WORTHY OF OUR SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION.
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